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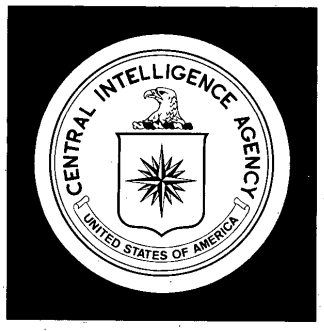

The President's Daily Brief

May 24, 1974

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

May 24, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

South Vietnam

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(Page 1)

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West European exasperation with the stalemated European security conference in Geneva has reached a new high, and the EC Nine may advise the Soviets that the conference will be adjourned if Moscow does not make concessions. *(Page 4)*

Some of the fighting between Iraqi government forces and Kurdish rebels has been heavy, but Baghdad still does not seem eager to launch a full-scale offensive. *(Page 5)*

Notes on the Middle East, Israel, China-Pakistan, and Thailand appear on *Page 6*.

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NORTH VIETNAM - SOUTH VIETNAM

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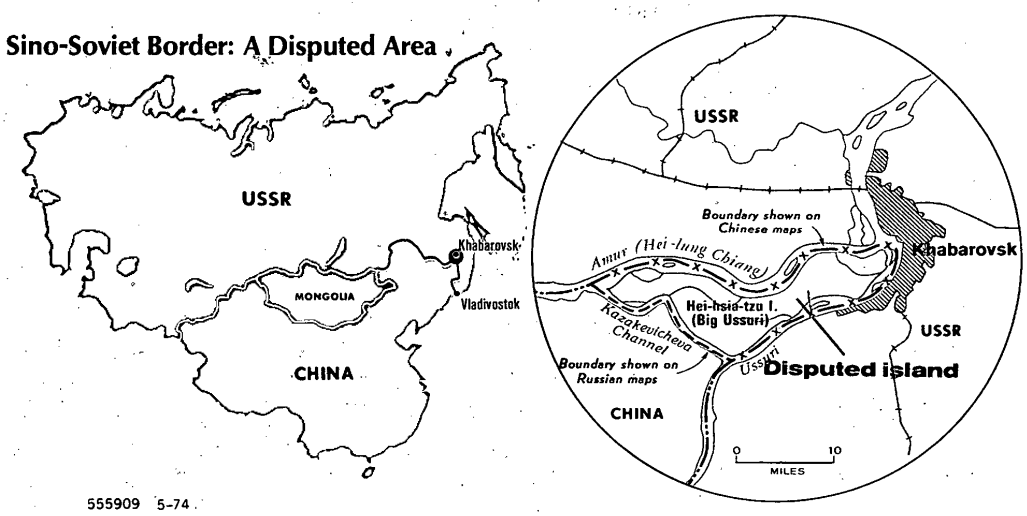
Sino-Soviet Border: A Disputed Area



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USSR-CHINA

In a departure from past practice, the Soviets yesterday publicized their response to China's latest attempt to assert its claim to the large island at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri rivers. The island, occupied by the Soviets, lies just off Khabarovsk and has long been one of the most sensitive spots on the Sino-Soviet border.

The Soviet statement was given to the Chinese chargé yesterday. Outwardly conciliatory, the message reasserts repeatedly Moscow's contention that the waters north of the island are "Soviet inland waterways." It says that the Soviets would look favorably on Chinese requests to use those waters, as long as the Chinese take the matter up beforehand with frontier officials or through diplomatic channels.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese have repeatedly refused to do this, since such a step would give official recognition to Moscow's de facto ownership of the island. China, in fact, appears to have a good legal case. According to international regulations normally applicable to such disputes, the riverine border would follow the main navigation channel, which, in this case, runs north of the island.

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Peking has never pushed the matter to direct confrontation, but the Soviets were extremely worried this time last year that a Chinese ship was about to try to force the issue. The Kremlin was anxious then, as it is now, to head off a Sino-Soviet incident prior to a summit with the US.

The Soviets may hope that Peking will take their publication of the matter as a warning not to challenge Moscow on this sensitive point. They may also hope to derive some propaganda mileage from contrasting Moscow's ostensibly conciliatory stance with China's adamant refusal to return the crew of the Soviet helicopter which landed in China on March 14.

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CSCE

West European exasperation with the stalemated European security conference in Geneva has reached a new high, and the EC Nine are considering telling the Soviets that the conference will be adjourned if Moscow does not make concessions. An adjournment could come in July and last for an indefinite period of time.

While most of the Nine had earlier favored holding a final session this summer and might have been amenable to a summit-level meeting, as the Soviets wish, the Nine now think that the results to date are too meager to justify holding a concluding session. The other members of NATO share the pessimism of the Nine. At a recent meeting of NATO's political committee, most of the Allies thought that the timing and level of representation for the final stage of the conference should not be discussed. Instead, they recommended that the results achieved thus far should be scrutinized to determine whether a final session of the conference should be held.

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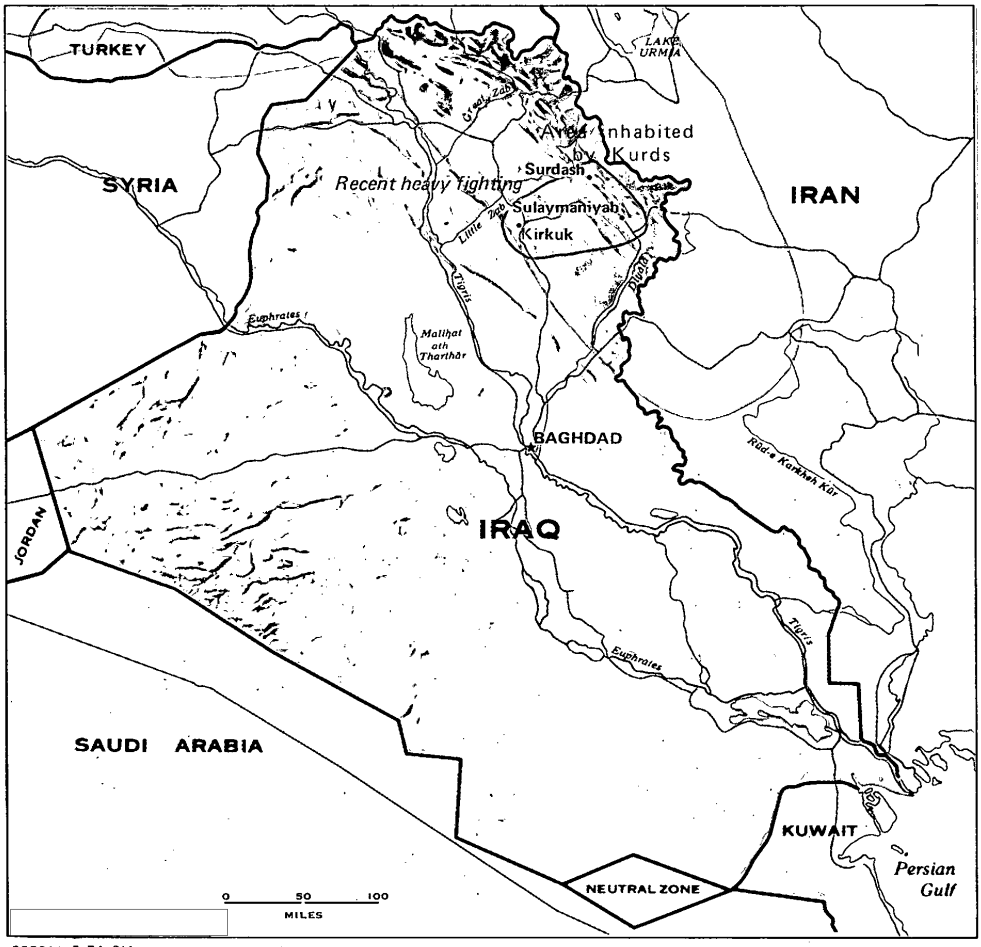

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IRAQ

Clashes between Iraqi government forces and Kurdish rebels are occurring daily in widely scattered parts of northern Iraq. Some of the fighting has been heavy, but Baghdad still does not appear eager to launch a full-scale offensive that would, in effect, concede the failure of its plans for Kurdish autonomy.

The government is resorting more frequently to heavy aerial and artillery bombardment, rather than close combat. The rebels are retaliating with commando raids, ambushes, and an increasing use of land mines, one of their most effective tactics. 25X1

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At least 60 percent of the Iraqi army is now in the north for possible use against the rebellion. The substantial movement of men and materiel this deployment has involved in recent months has resulted in logistics problems, which the Kurds are compounding with their continuing campaign of sabotage. The rebels have hit oil installations and cut several key rail lines recently.

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NOTES

Israel-Syria-Lebanon: Fighting was again at a low level on the Golan front yesterday, with only occasional exchanges of artillery and tank fire. Israeli air activity was higher than on Wednesday, but it was limited to reconnaissance missions and defensive patrols, primarily over southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights. On at least two occasions, Israeli aircraft--at least one of which may have been a pilotless drone--flew over Syrian territory.

Israel: The Labor Alignment and the two small liberal parties, the Independent Liberal Party and the Citizens Rights Movement, yesterday signed a formal agreement to form a coalition government. Prime Minister-designate Rabin undoubtedly will ask President Katzir to grant him more time to form a cabinet, which is likely to have numerous holdovers from Mrs. Meir's government. Defense Minister Dayan is expected to leave the government. Deputy Prime Minister Allon and Information Minister Peres are vying for the defense portfolio. Peres appears to have the inside track. Foreign Minister Eban will probably stay on to provide the appearance of continuity.

China-Pakistan: China has agreed to provide 60 MIG-19 jet fighters to Pakistan during this year and the next. Islamabad already has 125 of these relatively unsophisticated and comparatively inexpensive planes. China is building them at a rate of about 10 to 15 per month, and the large commitment to Pakistan indicates that Peking will continue to produce the plane for some time. The Chinese have over 1,700 MIG-19s in their own air force and have exported them to North Vietnam, North Korea, Albania, and Tanzania.

Thailand: Prime Minister Sanya has responded to the urging of the National Assembly and will stay on. He is likely to make several changes in his cabinet, but none that would portend any significant departure in Thailand's foreign or domestic policies.

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